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From the Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson Theatre Collection

THE BARON DE MEYER PHOTOGRAPH OF NIJINSKY IN "L'APRES-MIDI D'UN FAUNE"

Vaslav Nijinsky
1890—1950

THE TRAGEDY OF NIJINSKY WAS THAT, AS AN ARTIST, HE DIED IN 1919 BUT THAT, AS A MAN, HE LIVED FOR ANOTHER THIRTY-ONE YEARS. HIS CAREER LASTED A BRIEF TEN YEARS AND DURING ONLY THREE OF THOSE DID HE DANCE IN LONDON, BUT HIS REPUTATION AS THE GREATEST MALE DANCER OF THIS AND POSSIBLY ANY OTHER CENTURY IS SECURE FOR IT IS BASED, NOT ON A PHENOMENAL TECHNIQUE WHICH MIGHT BE, AND POSSIBLY HAS BEEN EQUALLED BY A FEW OTHER DANCERS, BUT ON A SUPREME ARTISTRY WHICH HAS EVER REMAINED UNCHALLENGED. THERE HAVE BEEN OTHER DANCERS WHO GAVE MAGNIFICENT PERFORMANCES AS PETROUCHKA, HARLEQUIN, THE GOLDEN SLAVE, BUT NO ONE HAS EVER SERIOUSLY CLAIMED THAT THEY EQUALLED THE CREATOR OF THOSE ROLES. TWO BALLETS, "LE SPECTRE DE LA ROSE" AND HIS OWN "L'APRES-MIDI D'UN FAUNE", CEASED TO EXIST WHEN HE WAS NO LONGER THERE TO DANCE THEM. VERY FEW PRESENT-DAY BALLET LOVERS CAN HAVE EVER SEEN HIM YET TO THEM HIS NAME LIVES MORE VIVIDLY THAN THAT OF ANY OF THE CONTEMPORARY IDOLS. HAD HIS LIFE TAKEN ITS NORMAL COURSE THERE WOULD BE MANY TODAY WHO COULD HAVE SEEN HIM ALMOST IF NOT QUITE AT HIS BEST.

ALAS, THAT SUCH A GOD SHOULD HAVE ENDURED SO LONG A TWILIGHT.

BALLET TODAY

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

THE opening date for the New York City Ballet season at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, has now been fixed as July 10th—a week later than was originally announced. At Frederick's Ashton's own suggestion the first night bill will consist of three ballets by the City Ballet's own choreographers, his own *Illuminations* coming later in the season. The next issue of *Ballet Today* will contain a long feature article by Anatole Chujoy, Editor of the New York *Dance News*, on the New York City Ballet and this will be illustrated with pictures which Walter E. Owen (who will ever be remembered for his photographs of Sadler's Wells in New York) has taken specially for this occasion. Next month's *Ballet Today* will altogether be somewhat in the nature of an American number, for Arthur Todd covers the eventful spring season when the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, Ballet Theatre and Katherine Dunham's company were all appearing practically concurrently. It now seems definite that Ballet Theatre will appear in London after the Edinburgh Festival at which, as already announced, they will dance during the first week.

Reverting to the New York City Ballet, I hear that Harold Lang, formerly a leading dancer with Ballet Theatre (and one of the original sailors in *Fancy Free*) who of recent years has been seen only in the big Broadway musicals, is joining the company for the London season.

Sadler's Wells' season at Covent Garden ends on July 8th but they will be back for one week only just before they leave for America to open at the Metropolitan Opera House on September 10th. *Dante Sonata* has been substituted for *Scènes de Ballet* and the other ballets new to America will be our productions of *Giselle* and *Les Patineurs* (it will be remembered that Ashton mounted this for Ballet Theatre in 1946) and *Don Quixote*. *Le Lac des Cygnes* (which will be given on the first night), *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Checkmate*, *Facade* and *A Wedding Bouquet* will again be taken. The brochure giving advance details of the day-to-day programmes at the Met. also gives a brief description of each ballet and readers must have been somewhat astonished to learn the following about *Le Lac des Cygnes* :—' The Sadler's Wells Ballet is the only company here performing the full and magical four acts of Tchaikovsky's celebrated work with original excruciating vignettes of great 18th century dancers and theatre managers ; choreography by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanoff, etc.' Explanation is that at one time it was proposed to revive *The Prospect Before Us* for America and somehow or other a line of descriptive matter must have found its way in with the rest of the material and eluded the notice of the proof readers. By the end of April over $141,000 had been taken in advance bookings (five months before the season opens !) and it is expected that by the end of May every ticket for every performance will have been sold.

Martha Graham with a company of fifteen dancers will be touring this summer in Europe, opening in Paris at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées on June 27th. She will then come to London prior to appearing in Holland, the Scandinavian countries and Italy.

I grow less and less happy about the Sadler's Wells production of *La Boutique Fantasque* which has recently returned to the repertoire. It was always a ballet which needed a firm directorial hand and I can remember periodical purges when Massine would swoop down and remove all the extra bits of business which inevitably crept in with so many small yet individual parts. The comparative ineptitude of the Sadler's Wells Can-Can dancers no matter who dances them (and there have been several changes in the part of the girl this season without any noticeable improvement) throws the whole ballet off-balance as a start, but with one exception all the toys have been poorly danced, the Cossacks in particular being a remarkably shabby lot. The exception is Gilbert Vernon's Snob which is quite brilliantly done with the steel-spring quality which Shabelevsky gave to it. This Snob, Legerton's Apprentice and Edwards' American Father (what an invaluable artist Edwards is !) are almost the only reminders of what *La Boutique Fantasque* once looked like.

I have always wanted to know in connection with Indian dancing what is the equivalent of the *pliés* and *battements* of the classical ballet school. Ram Gopal enlightened us on this amongst a great many other things during his week of lecture demonstrations at the Watergate Theatre in April, and we now know that what the student learns first is the correct positioning of the arms and hands in conjunction with the carriage of shoulders and back. This was an altogether fascinating exposition. Gopal expects to open his most important London season in September.

P. W. M.

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AN ACTION PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN AT THE DRESS REHEARSAL OF "BALLET IMPERIAL" SHOWING NADIA NERINA, BERYL GREY (CENTRE) AND PAULINE CLAYDEN DURING THE FIRST MOVEMENT

HERE'S RICHNESS!

by MARY CLARKE

"CHOREOGRAPHIC movement is an end in itself, and its only purpose is to create the impression of intensity and beauty."

This statement comes from some informal Notes on Choreography by George Balanchine which were printed in Dance Index in 1945 and it is a perfect exposition of his *Ballet Imperial*. "To create . . . beauty"—what higher ambition is there for any artist to pursue? Yet how few are big enough and brave enough to announce this simply and leave it untrammelled? "whenever i have nothing particular to say," admitted archy the cockroach,

> "i find myself always
> always plunging into cosmic
> philosophy
> or something."

How gloriously free of cosmic philosophy is *Ballet Imperial*! When the curtains rose at Covent Garden on April 5th to reveal the two diagonal lines of dancers —eight girls facing eight boys—it seemed a statement of the resources the choreographer would use: a stage for dancing on, dancers to dance, Tchaikovsky's second piano concerto to set the pulse, and a glorious Berman set of gold curtains, blue ermine-wreathed pillars and a surmounting Imperial eagle to announce the style and to acknowledge the tradition from which the movement inspiration would spring.

At first the dancers stand quite still, for Balanchine is never afraid to hold a basic formal pattern while dancers and audience draw new breath; it is thus that he avoids any appearance of restlessness. Then they begin to dance; the *corps* is augmented by eight more girls, a ballerina comes running in, weaving her way between the other dancers, two coryphées appear and finally, with the arrival of the prima ballerina and her cavalier, the balletic hierarchy is complete. The choreography is developed quite straightforwardly on a basis that is, roughly, an opening movement for the whole company, a quiet second movement *pas de deux* with accompanying figures, and a wonderful massed finale. The prima ballerina takes most of the solo piano passages of the score and the *corps de ballet* is

usually identified with the orchestra but there is no solemn literal correspondence.

The dance is purely classic, indeed *Ballet Imperial* is the most unalloyed classical ballet in the Sadler's Wells repertoire. Balanchine grew up in the Imperial Theatres and has perhaps understood and appreciated his heritage better than any of his compatriot choreographers who preceded him to Western Europe. His way with the choreographic traditions of Petipa has been to remember the unrivalled *pas de deux*, the lovely variations, the great *soli*, and to discard the romantic flummery with which these jewels were surrounded. So when he comes to compose in the Imperial style there is but the tiniest echo of the lost princess in *Le Lac des Cygnes* or the *pas classique Hongrois* of *Raymonda* and we see nothing but the steps of the classical vocabulary " in an endless chain of infinite combinations " as Balanchine himself says. The combinations, and the order in which they are fitted into the chain, are the fruits of Balanchine's own genius for, fundamentally, it is this that transforms all classroom *enchainements* into choreography.

To list beautiful moments in the ballet would be to list everything that happens and I came away from the early performances rejoicing not so much in small beauties as in the overall wonder of the composition. There is an exultance in movement, movement for its own sake, that is immediately communicable and seems so spontaneous that it as if Balanchine were creating for the first time in a medium that had all the excitement of novelty. Perhaps this is his greatest gift of all ; after twenty-five years of choreographic experience he has learned all the tricks of the trade but he has not become repetitive or blasé. How fresh, how joyous are the *sissonnes* in which Beryl Grey traverses the stage with upraised arms ! How simple, yet how lovely, is the end of the *pas de deux* when Fonteyn or Shearer gently lowers her heel to the ground and her head to her partner's shoulder. This is a ballet which derives no impetus from other arts and admits no subservience. I cannot agree with objections that such choreography is without heart or emotion ; on the contrary it seems to me that the dancing is moving as music may be moving, in its own right and without any translateable literary association. It is " an end in itself," and for me it is Ballet.

The performance that the dancers gave on April 5th made one humble in the face of their achievement in mastering so complex a work, in a style quite new to them, in so brief a time. On the first night the company was ready, but one of the extra joys of that triumphant evening was the knowledge that as they continued to dance the ballet they would become easier, more confident, and would give even better performances. Balanchine mounted *Ballet Imperial* in less than three weeks and by the end of four had launched three ballerinas in the leading role. Fonteyn gave only two performances before leaving for Milan, dancing magnificently and bestowing on the ballet her own gracious, imperturbable charm, but she did not seem entirely happy about the choreography. Technically she is, of course, perfectly capable of it and she now has the real prima ballerina manner while her walk is the loveliest I have ever seen. If she continues to dance it after her return she may grow into it and adjust herself as she did in *Scènes de Ballet* but I suspect that she would be more suited to the lyrical Balanchine ballets, such as *Serenade* or *Apollon Musagète* or the romantic *Cotillon* or *Night Shadow*. (There is ample room for all in the Wells repertoire.) Moira Shearer is an entirely different type of dancer and in the past when she has had to follow Fonteyn she has usually suffered in comparison. In *Ballet Imperial*, for once, the tables are turned. Shearer seems more at ease and has the flash and brilliance that the ballet needs. In build and style she somewhat resembles Mary Ellen Moylan (who dances *Ballet Imperial* for the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in America) for she has the same long legs and elegant feet, although she has more mannerisms than the American ballerina. Violetta Elvin's first performance held promise of real brilliance to come. She defines her movements with unusual clarity and her smile lights up the theatre.

The real " Balanchine dancer " of the Wells company, however, proved to be Beryl Grey in the secondary ballerina role, made famous by Maria Tallchief. From the very beginning she seemed confident and happy ; a dancer pure and simple, a wonderful, magnificent dancer, she gloried in her performance and made the audience glory too. I do not think she has had any role (or costume) which suited her better. The men are subsidiary to the women, as they were in the Imperial Ballet, so Michael Somes has less dancing than partnering and is more *danseur noble* than *premier danseur*. He handles his three alternative ballerinas with easy assurance (no mean feat of adaptability) and manages to be just a little more than a figurehead. In all his soloists Balanchine has been blessed with musically sensitive dancers and without this quality his ballets would be unendurable since the musical nuances are at times so subtle.

John Field and Kenneth Macmillan support well in the *pas de trois* and will do even better when they are more sure of themselves ; at the early performances they seemed a little cautious and restrained. Nadia Nerina and Pauline Clayden are precise little coryphées and for the *corps de ballet* there can be nothing but praise ; every dancer gives a performance of soloist standard and not one intrudes upon the design of the ballet. It is wonderful to see a large company all *dancing* together as if their hearts would burst with the

joy of it. And when they rise in the air simultaneously beating *entrechats* and then drop to one knee with arms upraised, I feel my heart could burst too.

March and April were good months at Covent Garden. There were inevitably some performances at which one prayed there were no discerning visitors present and others when one's prayer was Dr. Johnson's "Preserve me from unseasonable and immoderate sleep." But I would not have missed Fonteyn's beautiful, piteous Odette in *Le Lac des Cygnes* on March 16th or Nadia Nerina's Mam'zelle Angot or the Lynne-Field *Checkmate* partnership or, above all, Violetta Elvin's debut as Odette-Odile.

Mam'zelle Angot looks like building up into Nadia Nerina's best part. It is a tricky, tiring role and has to be performed as if it were quite spontaneous and absurdly easy. Nerina does not achieve all this yet (no one has since Fonteyn) but she dances very well indeed and has all the bubbling vivacity, the pouts and the flounces for the character. Gillian Lynne as the Black Queen in *Checkmate* at last has a role that displays some of the fire in her. To my mind she is wasted in most of the small classic solos that come her way and I have been waiting for years to see her true gifts used—as Ashton used them once at Sadler's Wells in a revival of *The Wanderer*. John Field is fine as her opposing Red Knight because he portrays a *real* opponent, a better fighter who is disarmed only by love and, but for the Black Queen's treachery, could have won the day. If the Red Knight does not establish ascendancy there is, obviously, no drama in the ballet ; yet I have seen it under-stressed to the point of obliteration.

Violetta Elvin's Swan Queen faced just about the stiffest competition it could face outside Russia by coming the very night after Fonteyn's. To have "got through" at all would have been creditable yet the performance on March 17th managed to be a very positive triumph. Succeeding performances confirmed that it was no freak success but an interpretation to be reckoned with. It is particularly good to see how Elvin's Russian quality comes through in this most Russian of ballets. For her, one feels, it is a birthright, a summit of ambition—as Hamlet is to the English actor, as Phèdre to the French tragedienne. In allowing her the different third act solo the administration admits the claim of the individual artist and for once we have no cautious carbon-copy approach but a dancer magnificently herself. In the proud arch of her back and the strong extension of her *arabesque* she reveals her schooling and, for her, the new exultant solo of the third act is superbly "right." She is only sketching the characters as yet but she makes her contrast and can already touch the heart with her Odette, particularly in the Act II exit which is a small masterpiece suggesting not only the agony of parting but the dreadful magic transforming the woman as her arms tremble with the strong beat of the swan's wings. To a lesser dancer I might say yes, very nice, and leave it at that ; but to Elvin I would rather say go on working *just as hard* as you worked to achieve this much and at the end of a year —well, we shall see.

Odette-Odile is a thankless role, however, unless the prince provides a worthy foil for the ballerina and John Field contributed much to the success of Elvin's debut. He also is comparatively inexperienced in his part but he has all that it takes to become a great Siegfried. I would like him to watch his ballerina a little more attentively when she explains the spell to him (in the 19th century ballet convention mime took the place of speech so eyes must substitute for ears), and he should pull out all the emotional stops in the fourth act. As yet there is less light and shade to his performance than to that of Somes (who can be downright harrowing) but this should develop and he is dancing magnificently.

In fact the time has come, I think, to start shouting about these two Siegfrieds who, for the first time in the history of Sadler's Wells, are giving the ballerinas a run for their applause in the third act variations *as well as* filling all requirements of mime and partnering. The coming generation, both at the Garden and out at Sadler's Wells, give ample promise of being able to keep up the standard and the boys at Covent Garden now provide their full measure of the enjoyment one receives from watching dancing. The eight boys in *Ballet Imperial* (their precision would have seemed no more than a rosy hope of Miss de Valois' four years ago) do all that is required of them, and the four boys in *Cinderella* are one of the joys of the second act. Brian Shaw's strength and rhythm are always a delight in *Symphonic Variations* ; Michael Boulton has danced *Les Patineurs* and the *Swan Lake pas de trois* ; and Gilbert Vernon has a vigorous, strongly personal style that is always pleasing. In *Mam'zelle Angot* we have the incomparable Alexander Grant supported by a whole galaxy of character portraits—the bucolic trio of Edwards, Legerton and Cranko ; the gorgeous comic byplay between John Hart and Franklin White over the substitute statue ; the solemn sense of duty of Richard Ellis's Officer, melted by one flicker of a woman's false eyelash ; and the neat little entr'acte sketches of pirates, savages and minstrels.

There are still horrible inadequacies in some of the most important male roles in the repertory and all the boys are likely to suffer from the shortage of good *dancing* roles as compared with all the "standing around" jobs they have to do. Most of them still have a lot to learn about make-up and general stage-craft and how to present themselves to full advantage. We still have not produced a Babilée or an Eglevsky but the standard is rising very perceptibly indeed and it no longer seems impossible that we ever shall.

THE CHOREOGRAPHER'S ART IN OUR TIME (1)

by PAUL TASSOVIN

OF late choreographing has become a popular "sport" with our young dancers. Every little "budding virtuoso" when he or she feels his or her strength as an interpretative executant, gets the creative bug. It would appear to be a natural evolution for a dancer to grow into a choreographer; yet how seldom does this happen. The reasons I think, are obvious and manifold. So few dancers have the education, background, experience, or intellect to become successful creative artists, and fewer still have the musicality, or the innate talent.

But our young people of the ballet, and some who are not so young in years, appear to be undaunted by the complexities and problems that have assailed the fashioners of terpsichore since the classical art was established. With the unselfconscious impudence of youth they think it the easiest thing in the world to repeat what they have seen their elders do; only with juvenile improvements, of course. Fokine and Massine are names that mean little to these self-important youngsters, who with scant knowledge, or respect for tradition, and with the shoddiest acquaintance of music, drama, painting, and sculpture; without, it would seem even a comprehensive grasp of their own branch of the art, rush headlong into folly.

As a result, unfortunate critics are too frequently burdened with tedious and nauseating displays of the stupid, the inane, and the ridiculous, and, what is worse, that vast and eager ballet public is often sadly and shamefully misled.

Alas, there exist no schools in this country for the enlightenment of these young masters who strive to practice their trite and miserable magic, and their only chance of exercising those creative gifts is with amateur production clubs, or when they can persuade

ANOTHER DRESS REHEARSAL PHOTOGRAPH OF A GROUPING DURING THE FINAL MOVEMENT OF "BALLET IMPERIAL"

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the director of some minor ballet company to let them try their hand at adding a new work to the repertoire.

Working with amateurs or with unpaid artists imposes severe limitations, and the result can seldom be satisfying. It is too often like trying to make bricks without straw. That directors or ballet producers sometimes allow themselves to be persuaded into sanctioning a new work by raw and inexperienced artists is evidenced by the spate of rubbish that goes for ballet on our stages. It is probably the director's cheapest and easiest way out of a dilemma, but whither does it lead the art?

The last fifty years of ballet might be compared to a mountain river that has cascaded brilliantly down, down the jagged ravine of half a century of crazy art, and flooded the amorphous war-wracked plain of today with a jumbled residue of fast disintegrating fragments. Ballet has certainly disgorged itself upon the multitude. This is an era of lowly earth-bound spreading ; not a time of inspiration and elevation towards the divine.

Only the other day at a Demonstration that attracted all the elegant authorities of London's ballet coterie, I heard a dancer-choreographer,* who was more than once referred to as " great," expounding, or rather describing ballet as an entertainment. If ballet is no more than this, and if choreographers have no greater conception of their art than as mere furnishers of entertainment, then let them give up ; let us all give up.

But what is to become of the art when quacks, impostors, and nobodies are permitted to serve up unadulterated rubbish, and be acclaimed for it? What can we do? Ban all companies except Sadler's Wells and Ballet Rambert? (Even they have been offenders on occasion.) No, such an action would be foolish, even if it were possible. We must encourage, not deter. We cannot really afford to throw away the tiniest glimmer of talent, when talent is so rare. Ballet is in dire need of choreographers. There exist dancers, designers, even composers in plenty, but choreographers of genius are almost extinct.

We must then endeavour to be kind to the youthful enthusiasts who thrust their half-baked and languid essays before our eyes. We must not be too harsh in our disapproval of their shortcomings, we must not kill them out of hand ; but let us try to persuade them to a more sincere attitude, a more serious approach ; let them be more worthy of the inherent gift, by being humbler in their efforts, and loftier in their purpose ; above all let them study.

The accomplishment of any project requires preparation, whether it be the winning of a war, or the revival of a culture. Before the making of a ballet, the choreographer must prepare himself. Let him not rush into producing with a smattering of this or that ; let him not begin until he knows what he is about. According to the thoroughness of his preparations will weigh the quality of his completed work.

In the continuation of this brief article I should like to discuss the choreographer's approach to his art, and outline the fundamental principles that govern balletic creation.

(*To be continued*)

* *This article is not a criticism of any particular artist's work.*

ADVICE TO HAPLESS HEROINES

By DONALD WRAY

THOSE of my readers who are human cannot fail to be moved by the heart-rending misery of our dear heroines of the ballet as they struggle feebly in their respective kettles of fish. Poor girls, insulated from Life by their delicate nurturing, sent straight from the hothouse unrealities of the ballet-school to the lush gilded cage of the theatre, what can they know of the tribulations which will face them ? And we, how can we blame them, we who are familiar with the frustrations of Reality, how can we wonder at their crumpling under the first cruel blows of Fate ? We must not fail them. A few cheerful words, a handshake, some sound advice, may well put our beloved ballerinas back on their feet, where they belong, smiling bravely once more through the Grand Tiers.

Every day my post contains some new tear-stained missive from these hapless girls. My answers to some typical cases, inadequate—alas !—though they are, I append below. I can but do my best. And girls, if life seems grey to you, if your burden is more than your frail shoulders can bear, write to your Uncle Donald and tell him All. He will advise you ; he will comfort you ; and particularly deserving cases he will deal with *in person*.

Giselle. Thank you for the photograph : *such* a lovely cottage, and in such pretty countryside, too. What a lot of Hovis you must sell to your summer visitors !

I'm so sorry that your mother disapproves of your dancing, dear, especially as you're so fond of it, but, although parents always seem so old-fashioned to their children (by the way, is your mother *really* a hundred-

NADIA BENOIS' DESIGN FOR "THE DESCENT OF HEBES" WHICH IS INCLUDED IN THE EXHIBITION OF PAINTING AND SCULPTURE BY LIVING ARTISTS, ALL OF WHOM HAVE SUBMITTED WORKS OF ART CONNECTED WITH THE BALLET. THIS EXH BITION IS NOW APPEARING AT THE WILDENSTEIN GALLERY, NEW BOND STREET, LONDON

and-four ?), she has had much more experience of the world (and of the next by the look of her), and I am sure she has only your happiness at heart. Perhaps she fears you'll go on the stage. Why not cut it down to once a week, say a frolic every Saturday afternoon with those jolly little Ovaltiney friends of yours ?

From your description this Mr. Loys sounds charming, though you had best be cautious with these nicely-spoken young men. He may, of course, be a gentleman farmer as you suggest, dear, but that sword with the horse's head handle sounds a trifle *outré*, to say the least. If he asks you to dance again, tell him, politely but firmly, that Mother Does Not Approve. Believe me, dear, it may sound melodramatic, but too much of your present mode of life may well drive you to an early grave. So caution, little one.

If you have any further trouble with your hair-grips, I would seriously consider the new short haircut, if I were you. It would save your mother all that tiresome fumbling, and it is so fashionable today, is it not ?

One last word. Do be careful with that Mr. Hilarion. It may have been just an Innocent Childhood Romance, but these solitary gamekeepers can be so exacting, as poor Lady Chatterley found to her cost.

Carmen. Really, girl, you can't expect much sympathy from me. If Mr. José is 'after you'—as you put it—you have only yourself to blame. It's no excuse to talk of 'animal high spirits' or 'hot Latin blood' ; this sort of behaviour simply won't do in Decent Society, it's a menace to our whole way of life. It's all very well to say he danced the fandango so nicely, but you must admit his habits are most unsavoury ; those curtains must be *filthy* by now. Agreed, he is young and talented, and he may recover in the fullness of time. But he *is* so erotic—oh, sorry, I mean erratic—and you may have unbalanced him completely ; I do hope you haven't ruined his youthful promise.

If you are really contrite you must leave this bullfighter *immediately* and go back to the factory. Won't the personnel manager start you again in another department ? With diligence you may even work up to boxes of a hundred. Believe me, it's much better than hanging round those nasty night-clubs and circuses. I'm sure you can't enjoy yourself there. All those chairs must clutter the place up dreadfully, and that style of dancing will ruin your feet in the long run.

And do look after that bodice in Scene 3 , child ; you're getting a big girl, now.

Swanilda. How lucky you are to live in one of those lovely villages we see in the tourist posters ! Such lovely colours ! Pink and green were always my favourites. And how sweet your merry chums must look, dressed in contrasting shades of bile and lobster '

Of course, I know our Transatlantic cousins made a great impression in Europe during the war, dear, but what a pity they have spoilt your turn of expression. When you say your gentleman friend Franz 'has gone nuts over some doll', I don't know whether to take you literally or not. However, if Mr. Delibes is writing the music, I'm sure things will turn out

happily in the end. Yes, Dr. Coppelius does sound a wee bit eccentric, but he is probably not at all sinister. I expect he is just a lovable old physicist crossed in love in his youth. Indeed, I wouldn't be surprised if he had invented an electronic woman to keep him company, and that Franz, like all men a boy at heart, had popped in to see if she were the right voltage, or something. You are young, dear, and I can quite understand a girl of your spirit being overcome by curiosity and peeping into the laboratory. But was it necessary to take the entire chorus of *The White Horse Inn* with you ? Surely not.

I am sorry to hear that Mr. Franz gets tiddly so easily ; this together with other things, will not make him the ideal Life Partner. Perhaps the little booklet I am forwarding will convince him of the error of his ways. Why not get him to take up dancing ? It *would* be such an asset, you know. But whatever you do, dear, don't discard him. He may be headstrong, and the omens in Act I all against him, but, nevertheless, I am convinced he is your Mr. Right. Anyway, who else is there to partner you in Act 3 ? I'm sure dear Dr. Coppelius, active old gentleman though he is, is now far beyond that sort of thing.

Betrayed. Dry those eyes, dear, and chin up ; it was ignorance and nothing else in your case, I am convinced. If you send me a stamped addressed envelope I will forward you the titles of one or two books you should read and a list of Charitable Institutions who will help you in your Trouble. Don't give another thought to that nasty man ; he was nothing but a dissolute Rake. Yes, dear, that last scene must have been sheer agony for you, but, believe me, it was a Merciful Release for us all.

New London Film Society

The New London Film Society (Regent 5754) are giving a special programme of Dance and Ballet Films at the Scala Theatre, London, at 3.30 p.m. on Sunday, June 4th. Included in the programme are U.S.S.R. films, *Ballerina* and the *grand pas de deux* from *Bayerderka* with Dudinskaya and Chabukiana, and *Paris, Capitale de la Danse* with Yvette Chauviré, Lycette Darsonval and Michel Renault.

PIRMIN TRECU, PATRICIA MILLER AND DAVID BLAIR IN "SUMMER INTERLUDE"
Photograph by Alec Murray

SUMMER INTERLUDE: AN APPRECIATION

by FRANK JACKSON

TO analyse *Summer Interlude*—Michael Somes' first ballet—is rather like entombing a butterfly in a killing bottle. Dead, it is no rare specimen. But, alive, how pretty it looked!

Having once seen and enjoyed *Summer Interlude*, you can, if you are in analytical mood, easily trace in it the influence of those choreographers Somes admires. This, in a first work, is not so surprising as that he has assimilated these influences so well that the result seems completely self-assured. It is not as easy as it lookes to create a genuine mood of lightheartedness. And, at least, Somes' models, as befits a dancer-choreographer, are those who express themselves in terms of dance rather than in terms of 'drama.' Whatever its shortcomings, *Summer Interlude* is a *ballet*; it makes its effects in terms of dancing.

The theme is slight enough. On a seashore, the romance of a peasant boy and girl is interrupted by the arrival of a party of very *chic* bathers. Peasant boy flirts with bathing girl; peasant girl with bathing boy. Peasant boy and girl come together again, but she has changed; he has lost her, and there is a cloud over the summer sun as the bathing boy takes her away, for good. This 'story' is little more than a convenient peg on which to hang a series of dances to the Respighi arrangement of old French airs and dances.

Sophie Fedorovitch has designed some stunning bathing costumes, those for the girls being more successful than those for the boys, which are in some cases too *chichi*, reminiscent of those frightful male mannequin parades. In the background are some rather lumpish rocks, which seem neither decorative nor necessary. But the costumes have certainly assisted the choreographer in conveying his summery mood.

The four main dancers are Pirmin Trecu and Patricia Miller as the Peasant boy and girl; and Elaine Fifield and David Blair as the Bathers.

David Blair is less effective here than in showy classical roles, perhaps because he is, as yet, unable to combine the demands of dancing and character, technique and feeling. On the other hand I liked Elaine Fifield a great deal better in this than in her classical roles, when she always looks slightly worried. She wears a wonderful costume and is remarkably like the well-remembered Margot Fonteyn of the *Facade* Polka—a delightful mixture of cheek and sophisticated charm.

The part of the Peasant girl is a sort of Odette-Odile in miniature. When she exchanges her long peasant skirt for a fashionable bathing dress, Patricia Miller manages to convey a change in her character, too. She is not quite used to her new-found sophistication, maybe, but it suits her sufficiently for her to be able to leave her peasant lover and go away with his rival—a trifle dreamily, as though not quite believing it all. In this part, Patricia Miller was not only the essence of youthful charm, she succeeded in creating a character which changes before our eyes.

Pirmin Trecu, as the Peasant boy, displays once again his remarkable quality. He is one of those rare dancers, born not made, who are artists in the fullest sense of the word. There may not be very great depth in his part, but he invests it, as he does everything, with a sense of ceremony. He identifies himself completely with the character he is portraying, instinctively making an exact balance between ends and means. He is a fine dancer, but never uses his technique for display purposes only. He has limitless possibilities which it would take a Massine to exploit, though it must be said that Somes has understood the special capabilities and differing temperaments of all his four main dancers and has made good use of this knowledge.

It is, of course, very easy to like *Summer Interlude*. But I like to think that its enthusiastic reception on the first night was also a sign that audiences are grateful for a *dancing* ballet, for a change. Dancing is, of course, capable of expressing much more than it is called upon to do here, but whatever is expressed in *Summer Interlude* is expressed in dance, a fact which the dancers seemed to welcome as much as the audience.

There is no doubt that Michael Somes has pulled a success out of the hat first time. It now remains to be seen whether he has said all he has to say. Clearly he is not one of those choreographers who are always striving to express something a little beyond their grasp, but we must wait for his next ballet before we know how far his grasp extends.

The action photograph on the cover shows the finale of "Ballet Imperial" and was taken at the dress rehearsal

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DANCERS IN CLASS: SKETCHED BY PETER RE

T THE SCHOOL OF RUSSIAN BALLET, CHELSEA

DANCE AGONY—PERROT TO PETIT

By MICHAEL CAREY

NOBODY ever thinks of asking an accountant "Why did you become an accountant?"—or a greengrocer, "What made you go in for cabbages?" But this is the first conversational move when somebody meets a dancer.

I suggested at least half an answer to this question in a previous article:—because ballet dancing is like a religion—one might as well ask a Christian "Why do you believe in God?" I pointed out further that this is the only reasonable explanation for the extreme physical discomfort suffered by the dancer in training, often with no hope of success.

What happens, we may now ask, when the dancer is called upon to portray physical or great mental suffering on the stage?

Looking first at the so-called "Romantic" Ballet period, we find at least two successful ballets, *La Sylphide* and *Giselle*, exploiting the story of a poetic young hero falling in love with a supernatural being and suffering untold agony for his love. It is easy to see how this appealed to the then current deification of woman—more theoretical than applied. Carnal relations with a Wili would be unthinkable and the routine dance of exhaustion provided an interesting Freudian sublimation, apart from its obvious role of showing man in his true colours by demonstrating his strength and bestiality.

YUREK SHABELEVSKY AS PETROUCHKA

Whilst these ballets are historically interesting in so far as they show the male dancer dancing and not merely acting as a *porteur*, it can hardly be said that their choreography is successful in showing the hero's suffering. The conventional classical solos given to Albrecht and probably, if M. Gsovsky is right, to James, need a dancer of great mimetic power before they convey the intended meaning, and the steps in themselves are exhilarating rather than calculated to inspire pity.

Apropos of this, one sees in Balanchine's *Night Shadow* a ballet which could easily have followed the *Giselle* pattern with a dance of exhaustion added. Balanchine avoided this, however, and whilst his climax is perhaps not altogether successful, he has cleverly built an atmosphere of suffering and frustration around the Poet, with a *pas de deux* which really is *à deux*, and the ingenious if undansante ending.

It is a pity that Ninette de Valois was not so wary when she made her *Haunted Ballroom* in 1934. This was a most promising theme suggested by Geoffrey Toye. Unfortunately she was unable to treat it in a suitable manner and caused the initial conception—a man doomed to die by the weight of his family's tragic history—to degenerate into a naive *Giselle* theme, with the Stranger Player as the Queen of the Wilis. One sees in Miss de Valois' earlier ballets an occasional Jooss-like movement in the midst of her academic classicism. *The Haunted Ballroom* is no exception and one feels regret that she had not digested such ideas more fully so as to have extended them from the male "ghosts" to the Master when he has to perform his *grand pirouette à la seconde*. A step less expressive of suffering one cannot imagine.

Without pretending to give an exhaustive survey of the treatment of suffering in ballet one can safely say that from the Romantic period to that of Diaghilev, *Petrouchka* is the most outstanding example. Fokine achieved a completely successful expression of the puppet's agony in the cell scene and the finale, partly

by the unique movement-style he made for him, partly because of the apt orchestration of Stravinsky's music, and partly one imagines by the genius of Nijinsky's interpretation which gave a lead to future dancers of the role.

Too much has already been written about the universal nature of the *Petrouchka* theme for me to add to it, but it is instructive to notice how important the choice of story and collaborators was for the choreographer. One wonders in this connection if even Fokine could have made much of the absurdities of the scenario for the second act of *Giselle*.

Looking through ballet programmes for the nineteen thirties one finds two names of outstanding importance to our theme: Kurt Jooss and Antony Tudor. These two choreographers stand in the stream of modern ballet as the two arches of a bridge so to speak. Round them swirl the controversial currents of Nijinskas and Lichines, the Ashtons and Massines: all busy and excited in a great rush to outdo each other in originality. But neither Jooss nor Tudor had to try to be original—their respective choeographic styles were not so much the result of conscious striving, but were rather *inborn*. They both had something definite to say and their styles grew out of this necessity. They both had something to say, and it is here that their resemblance begins to fade. Their something was with each different—they were concerned with the two catch words of European intellectuals of the twenties and thirties: Jooss indirectly with Marx, Tudor with Freud. To develop this statement would take more space than I have here; let it suffice that both were interested in themes of topical importance. In both cases this inevitably resulted in their ballets dealing very much with suffering, more mental than physical.

Of the two artists Jooss seems to have been the more successful. There are certain moments in some of his ballets which stand out to the mind's eye long after they have been seen and they are almost invariably expressive of some sort of suffering. Not always suffering undergone so much as implied by contrast: the writhing little profiteer and the grey misery of the mother and wives in *The Green Table*, or the innocent gullibility of the young girl in *Big City* and the brooding despair of the young man. Jooss's most important contribution to modern ballet has been his study and exploitation of the field of movement outside the purely classical: it is in this that he scores over Tudor.

In *Jardin aux Lilas* and *Dark Elegies* Tudor achieved to a large degree an atmosphere expressive of the themes; in the former the suffering of frustrated love, in the latter sorrow for the dead. Yet here again, as in *Petrouchka*, one wonders how much atmosphere would be left without the strong influence of the music—how much does the movement alone express? Perhaps in *Dark Elegies* quite a lot, but it is interesting to note that here one finds, as in the Romantic Ballets, that ecstasy moves in to take its place with climax but giving this time a religious quality to the sorrow. Tudor, like Fokine, does not allow the walls of classical technique to imprison him; he is like, however, the man on parole: he never escapes legal vigilance. The classical school is strict and it teaches one remarkably little about movement of the actual torso. This is why Jooss can invent a movement in itself completely expressive of suffering, he has spent years studying "off balance" positions and distortions of line produced in use of the hips, stomach and chest. Suffering is by definition a distorted emotion and needs such movement.

The fashionable cafés of Paris to-day still carry the echoes of the ideas of Lenin, Hitler, and Proust. Ideas of violence or, at the other end, pacifism, submission of the individual to the state or complete anarchism, complete abandonment to one's sensations and sexual abnormality: such is the Parisian artistic climate. Given this it is natural that a choregrapher working surrounded by such an atmosphere will choose themes and situations needing the portrayal of suffering. This has been so with Roland Petit and we see that in at least three ballets he has this problem.

In only one of these ballets did Petit have any great success—i.e. *Jeune Homme et la Mort*. Although the other two, *Fiancée du Diable* and *Les Demoiselles de la Nuit*, are on the whole good ones, he has still not got beyond the stage of his predecessors and invented movement wholly expressive of suffering and not dependent on the mimetic power of the dancer. In *Le Jeune Homme et la Mort* he has been successful by virtue of Babilée's unique acrobatic virtuosity and not by any advance in choreographic fantasy. The weakness of Petit is that he is still using a dance vocabulary consisting of fundamentally classical movements and usually comes back to the *tour* or *batterie* for the expression of a climax—there is nothing wrong in this, but it imposes unnecessary limitations. The sphere in which he shows a real advance is that of the *pas de deux*: he has shown remarkable invention in the above ballets and has created movement deeply expressive of the relationships he is trying to show.

It is thirty-eight years since Fokine wrote, "Man can and should be expressive from head to foot," and it is ironic that the professional dancer who undergoes so mch suuffering to make his body expressive has still to hear and understand these words. We must extend our "religion," not as the German school of Wigman did by creating an equally limited nonconformist sect, but by combining the techniques of the modern and classical schools and making a system of dance education which will produce *completely* expressive dancers and choreographers.

"WYOMAMIE", ONE OF THE DANCES PERFORMED BY THE HAMPTON INSTITUTE CREATIVE DANCE GROUP

THE HAMPTON INSTITUTE
UNIQUE DANCING ACADEMY OF THE AMERICAN NEGROES

by MICHAEL LORANT

THE native African Negro took unbounded pleasure in dance. It was the most favourite form of recreation and amusement among them, and was confined to no one tribe. At work or at play, also after work, the African, and today his descendants, the American Negro, is afflicted with what the great coloured poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar, calls "itchin' heels"—heels that are ready to caper in almost any kind of dancing movement at a moment's notice.

Seeing that this is an original and native endowment, the unique Hampton Institute, in Virginia, *the greatest and most famous Negro Dancing Academy all over the world*, has been most interested in the cultural development of the dance. The two most important factors which have been motivating influences in developing this interest through the years, have been first the recognition of the fact that the dance, whether we admit it or not, occupies a large place in the recreational life of young people in general; secondly, a great native capacity is found to exist in abundance among Negro youth which, if properly developed, particularly in the field of *creative dance*, will have unlimited possibilities to inspire and enrich life.

The Negro, often called a child of nature, is a pleasure-loving individual, who in his native Africa, hunted, fished, sang, and often gathered around the fire at night to tell or to hear the old tales which had come down to them as a tribal inheritance. Often these stories were expressed in rhythmic motion to the beat of the drum, or to the sound of some crude instrument or barbaric song. Therefore, early in the history of the race, the dance was developed as a means of expression and later became the principle form of recreation. When the day's work was done

or when there were occasions for rejoicing or even sorrowing, by day or by night, men, women, and children came together and fittingly celebrated with dancing.

Hampton Institute, has a special " Creative Dance Group," which continues to believe in this great Negro inheritance. It consists of thirty-five students, who regularly appear in various leading educational institutions of the U.S. The programme of the " Creative Dance Group " covers a wide range of subjects and offers a variety of entertainment which proves interesting not only to the lover of the creative dancing but to the general public as well. They dance modern, character and folk dances, including some of the American Negro of an earlier generation, labour rhythms, spirituals, and genuine African tribal dances, the last giving something of the genuine life and customs of the native Africans.

The first public appearance of the " Creative Dance Group," away from the mother Institute, was given at the Mosque on March 23rd, 1925, in Richmond, Virginia. This was the *first time* Negroes had ever been allowed to use the Mosque, a million-dollar auditorium and one of the finest in the South of the United States. Since then the " Creative Dance Group " appears every year in the cities of America, and through the type of programme they offer they suggest a greater use of racial and native material, as they firmly believe this gives opportunity to develop innate capacities and talents for powerful cultural and educational ends.

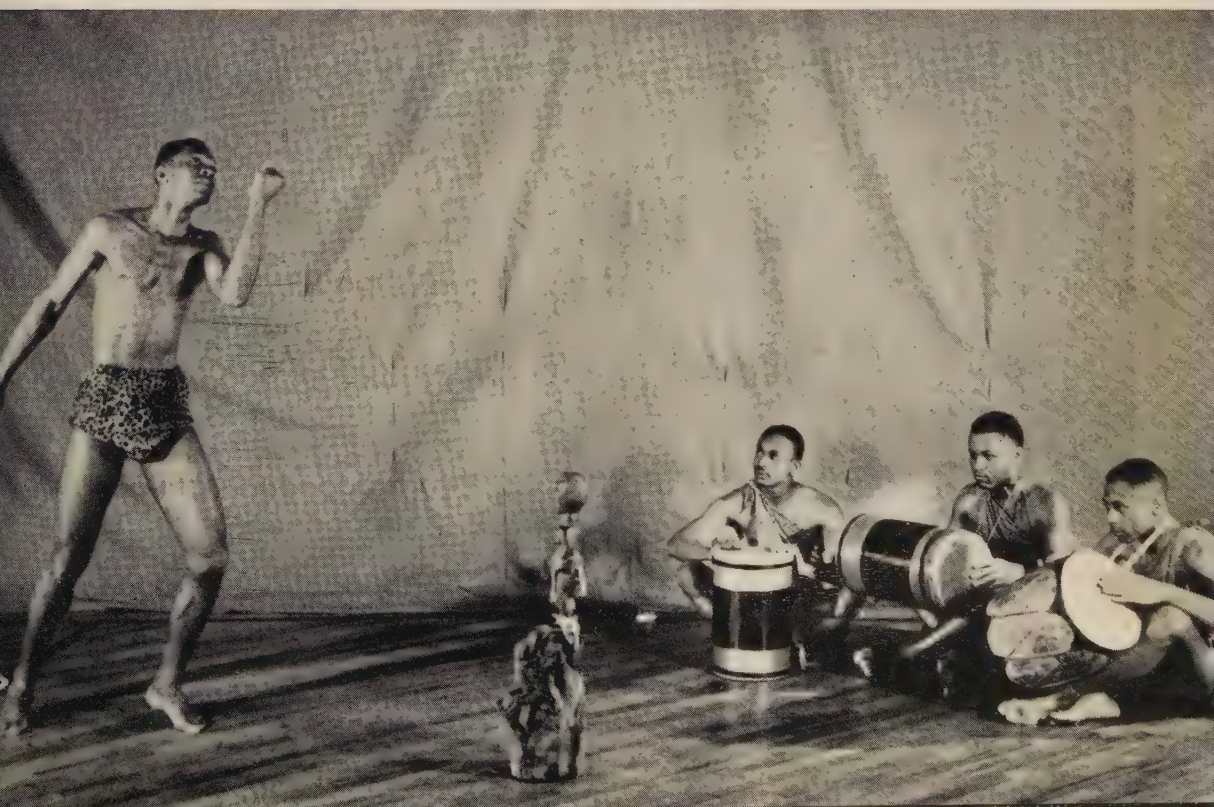
The dances, designed, composed and practised almost entirely by Negro choreographers, musical composers and ballet instructors, are original, deep-rooted creations. They are unique and incomparable with any other dancing form. Here are short descriptions of some of the outstanding Negro dances performed by the artists of the famous " Creative Dance Group " of the Hampton Institute :

THE CHORAL. This was composed by Pauline Chellis and shows *in dance form* the blending of the *voice parts* of a Negro choral. A chorus in dance—one may call it.

MAMAH PARAH. This is the most unusual dancing creation of the " Creative Dance Group." It is danced on stilts by artists who have a fine sense of equilibrium and balance. They dance before their chiefs on special occasions to the great delight of their fellow tribesmen, as Negroes always enjoy feats of skill and daring.

THE FANGAI MAN. This is the " African killer." When a native feels that he has been greatly

" THE FANGAI MAN ", A DANCE BY THE HAMPTON INSTITUTE CREATIVE DANCE GROUP DESCRIBED IN THIS ARTICLE



wronged by another, to the extent that he desires to have him killed, he goes to the Fangai Man, who performs a ceremony before his ' client's ' family, sprinkles medicine to protect them, then places a fatal charm on the enemy after which he dances a dance of joy over the successful outcome of his labours.

WYO MAMIE. It is an African custom that on the night before the wedding, the girl's parents must give their final consent. The nearest relative of the groom brings a beautiful basket filled with gifts for the bride, which is opened after the parents give their consent. After the entering ceremony is performed, the gift from the groom is presented while all sing and dance. At the end of this part of the ceremony, the party leaves for the home of the groom where they have a grand jollification, singing and dancing, until afte midnight. The customary dance on this occasion is Wyo Mamie.

COTTON NEEDS PICKIN'. This is one of the many work songs sung by the cotton-field hands in the early plantation days. This song has been interpreted in steps and rhythmic actions characteristic of Negro life.

CUTTING THE SUGAR CANE. This is the creation of a white dancer—that of the famous Ted Shawn. Four sugar-field workers on a hot tropical day, work rhythmically at cutting and finding the sugar cane. Noticing the absence of the overseer, they give way to a spontaneous rhythmic outburst of joy. In the midst of this, the overseer returns and lays a whip across their shoulders, sending them resentfully back to their labour. At the end of the day, they take themselves homeward, but not without a momentary remembrance of their joyful truancy.

There is something new and entirely novel in the line of the Hampton Institute dances. With consummate skill, this group of talented young coloured men and women interpret moods, feelings, customs and folklore such as have never been seen anywhere before. These rhythmic ballets tend to make blossom the real genius of the Negro, who expresses his innermost life and soul always and everywhere—in dances.

" THE PROSPECT BEFORE US ? " OR PITY THE POOR AUDIENCE

by JANET SINCLAIR

THE last twenty years have shown a remarkable shifting of influence and interest in the world of ballet outside Soviet Russia—a shifting away from the exotic world of Diaghilev and his followers to the more ladylike refinements of British ballet. When one remembers one's pre-war ballet viewpoint, the revolution appears extraordinary ; before the war, all the excitements and innovations, all the large-scale achievements and attempts, came from " the Russians," while the Vic-Wells plodded along in its quiet little way, producing works of great charm and integrity but little passion.

At the end of the decade at Sadler's Wells Theatre, when the British company was beginning to feel their feet, their works began to show power as well as charm, and the audiences for such ballets as *Horoscope* and *Checkmate*—which had a real greatness during its first season but nowadays is marred without Brae and Helpmann—and later *Dante Sonata*, began to feel that here was the beginning of something important.

With the war and the exile of the great Russian dancers and choreographers from the European scene few had any hope that the Wells could survive at all : survive they did, but at great cost. It was not only the male dancers who fell by the wayside : English ballet lost Miller and Honer, Argyle had already abandoned career for marriage : Brae and May, the " heavenly twins " of the late 'thirties, were absent for long periods and have never danced since the war as they did before it : the new young stars were overworked and all but the very strongest thrown aside, while Ashton, during his long incarceration in His Majesty's Forces, was unable to work during what might have been his most productive period. However, the company did continue to exist, and the past ten years have seen the slow but steady eclipse of the great Russian successes and the converse rise into prominence of the British ballet.

So the Wells, in such a thriving state before the war, has had to mark artistic time and perhaps for this reason it is hardly generous to condemn them for their sins of omission. Nevertheless, it is apparent that during all the years of the Wells' life not one of their choreographers has ever produced an entirely original idea, an idea which could shake the ballet world and cause it to change direction, be it ever so slightly, as

did the present-day ballet of Kurt Jooss, the symphonic ballet of Massine and the psychological ballet of Antony Tudor. This is possibly due to the fact that for so many years the choreography of the company was restricted to de Valois herself and to Ashton : the one a fine craftsman with a real gift for the creation of character, the other interested almost to the exclusion of everything else in the potentialities of the human body to make beautiful patterns : and neither of them with any great gift for originality. During the war, with the removal of Ashton, Miss de Valois, who had had within her company at various times Tudor, Staff and Gore, admitted a third figure to the choreographical group : Helpmann.

Helpmann is undoubtedly the most versatile single figure on the English stage today : the very lack of specialisation which has made his career such an astonishing one (and he has just embarked upon yet another métier—that of operatic production) perhaps mitigates against his entire success as choreographer,

MARKOVA AND DOLIN IN "MR. PUPPET", ONE OF THE NEW WORKS THEY ARE PRESENTING DURING THEIR CURRENT TOUR OF THE PROVINCES

Photograph by Houston Rogers

for he is full of ideas, often brilliant ones, but lacks the inventive vocabulary to create the real dance-drama towards which he is groping. One is tempted towards the view that he himself knows that " his affections do not that way tend," for his output is small—five ballets in eight years. Given a strong basic situation he can always make something interesting, but it is not always interesting from the point of view of the dancing itself. However, his *Hamlet* is the nearest single approach to an entirely new balletic idea within the Sadler's Wells organisation, and for that, immense credit is due to him. It is a pity that he and Ashton have never worked together on a ballet, the one devising the plot and controlling the dramatic situations, on to which the other would graft the dancing movement.

Since the war ended, Miss de Valois has adopted a more progressive choreographical policy and, quite apart from the invitations issued to choreographers already famous to work on her company, which does not affect the present argument, has given chances to various choreographers previously unknown to work with her second company. When considering such ballets as *Étude*, *Parures* and *El Destino* one cannot help treacherously wondering whether her exclusive pre-war policy was not amply justified : however, the ballets of Franca and Cranko show that the young dancers of today have something to say if only they can be given the chance to say it. Unfortunately Franca is no longer connected with the Wells, which thereby loses a first-class original mind : John Cranko, the other discovery, has infinite promise and would have fitted perfectly into the pre-war Wells structure. How he will succeed when asked, as one presumes he will be eventually, to grapple with the vast stage and auditorium of Covent Garden, one cannot tell. In any case, one feels that he is a choreographer who, inventive and original though his work is, will be content to perfect the experiments of his predecessors, without new theories or revolutionary ideas.

It is plain to all but the most unseeing eye that Sadler's Wells and British Ballet is ripe for a revolution of one kind or another. Its achievement, as it took the Americans with their entirely fresh viewpoint to suggest to us, is the creation of a ballerina who can take her place beside the very greatest of the dancers of the past, supported by a *corps de ballet* so magnificently drilled as to have the most singular resemblance to peas in a pod. As this was the ideal, on an even larger scale, in Czarist Russia, it becomes clear how much the Wells have gone backwards, not through the past ten or twenty years, but through the past fifty. Indeed, the retrogression takes place in varying stages throughout even the current repertoire : the first performance of de Valois' *Don Quixote* was followed by

a *Les Patineurs* performed in quite the vilest style of any seen by the writer since the opening night in 1937.

This retrogression must have the most disastrous effect upon the audience, who are by now so bemused and hypnotised by the formal and abstract beauties of pure classical ballet as exemplified in *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake*, *Cinderella* or *Symphonic Variations* that when they are shocked by a work full of characterisation into using their brains, they cannot endure it. It is true that they roared the house down for such a supposedly " realistic " work as *Miracle in the Gorbals* but there is little true reality in such a ballet, which is an idealised simplification of the types one might find in a Glasgow slum and in no way a realistic picture of such people, confused further by the religious issue, and to gain a true picture of human nature in its less elevating aspects one must still turn to the social documentation and penetrating observation of Tudor and Jooss.

To strip the glamour from ballet and turn it into a human canvas, instead of a pretty Christmas-card, however, is bound to be unpopular and to this reason in the main the present writer attributes the disapproval of the audience on the occasion of the first performance of Miss de Valois' *Don Quixote*. One must grant in the first place that the story balletically is almost impossible : but ballets with equally or more improbably danceable stories have " got by " before. Having agreed that this ballet in no way fulfils the necessary qualification for great ballet to be explicable through movement alone, there is much to interest and fascinate in this new work. However, the audience of today does not want to see anything different : it wants the mixture as before. The present-day ballet audience, so largely composed of people who took to ballet during, or immediately after, the war, will accept such ballets as *The Rake's Progress* because the seal of previous public and critical opinion is already set on these works : but the current repertoire, if it dares to go beyond the visually beautiful on the one hand or on the other the oversexed " glamour " of *Miracle in the Gorbals*, *Carmen* or other story ballets requiring little or no mental effort, has, to use current phraseology, " had it."

There is no glamour in *Don Quixote*. Neither is there very much dancing as Ashton's audience understands it. What there is in plenty is characterisation. The really unfortunate thing is that one can feel the choreographer's lack of practice—her work reminds one of the movements of the dancer who has performed but missed classes for three months. But such pure inderived movements as Fonteyn's in her repeated dance are a shock to the eye and the mind. This is a good thing, but it is not enough.

What ballet needs today is a new Noverre, a new Fokine, to lift it out of the rut in which it is steadily burying itself. Whether he would have an immediate success, or even any kind of welcome, is problematic : the point is, he must come, if ballet in England, and therefore in the world as we know it, is to go forward again.

New York News

THE four-week season of the New York City Ballet concluded on March 19th. It was the most successful season the company has ever had and, what is most important, the success was not due primarily to Balanchine's choreography or Maria Tallchief's dancing, as heretofore, but to the ballets of Frederick Ashton (*Les Illuminations*) and Jerome Robbins (*Age of Anxiety*), both staged to poetical works and both emphasising the international character of the company. This is important because the New York City Ballet and its forerunners (the American Ballet, Ballet Caravan and Ballet Society) were often considered, especially by their enemies, a strictly personal affair of Balanchine and Kirstein. The company has now proved that it can work with any choreographer, so long as the choreographer has something to say and the talent to say it. The dancers will re-assemble end of May for rehearsals for the London season.

With three New York seasons opening between April 9th and 23rd the town is full of dancers but very little news. Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo opened its three-week spring season April 9th at the Metropolitan Opera House. Its chief attraction was the guest appearances of Yvette Chauviré who made her first appearance opening night in *Giselle*. Novelties included revivals of Michel Fokine's *Prince Igor* and *Les Elfes* and Serge Lifar's *La Mort du Cygne* and *Romeo et Juliette*, the latter two in Mlle. Chauviré's repertoire.

On April 19th Katherine Dunham and her company made their first New York appearance in *Rhapsodies Caribe* in more than two years. On April 23rd Ballet Theatre opened its tenth anniversary season at the Center Theatre in Radio City, the scene of Ballet Theatre's first triumph in January, 1940.

Ballet Theatre announced four new ballets for the season : *Jeux*, by William Dollar to Debussy, inspired, as the programme says by the Nijinsky ballet of 1913 ; *Designs With Strings*, by John Taras, to Tchaikovky's Trio in A Minor, in decor by Pierre Balmain ; *Caprichos*, by Herbert Ross, inspired by Goya etchings, to music by Béla Bartók, in decor by John Ward ; and *Nimbus*, by Antony Tudor, to music by Louis Gruenberg, in decor by Oliver Smith.

Somehow at this early writing neither of the seasons have stirred up any excitement. Tickets are reported to be going well for all the attractions but enthusiasm is definitely lacking.

On April 20th Ballet Associates in America gave a dinner dance at the grand ballroom of the Hotel Waldorf Astoria as a send-off for the New York City Ballet. Net proceeds will help the company acquire some much needed costumes and, perhaps, a set or two.

Announcements of the Sadler's Wells season in New York, September 10th to October 1st, were sent out on April 5th, five months in advance, and the Hurok office reports a most gratifying response in mail orders. The repertoire includes *Le Lac des Cygnes*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Giselle*, *Don Quixote*, *Scènes de Ballet*, *Les Patineurs*, *Checkmate*, *Facade* and *A Wedding Bouquet*. The season will open with *Le Lac des Cygnes*. Balletomanes are not a little disappointed by the fact that Ashton's *Cinderella* will apparently not be brought to U.S. They loved its first act and would warm up to its second now that they have had an occasion to get better acquainted with Ashton through his immensely successful *Illuminations*.

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MARY EYLES, 29, ROKESLY AVENUE LONDON, N.8 MOU. 1701

News from Paris

OWING to the recent strike by Paris Opera technicians there has been little news. The new ballet by Lifar for Tamara Toumanova, *L'Inconnue*, had to be postponed because of this. *Phèdre*, the Cocteau-Auric-Lifar ballet, will definitely have its première at the May Musical Festival in Florence when the following ballets will also be given :—*L'Après-midi d'un faune*, *Aubade*, *Mirages*, *Guignol et Pandore*, *Pavane pour une Infante Defunte*, *Salade*, *Entre deux Rondes*, *Divertissement*, *Dramma per Musica* and *Suite en Blanc*. Except for the first-named (in which he dances), these are all Lifar ballets, and as only about twenty dancers are appearing the results are not likely to be outstanding. At the same Festival Aurel Milloss is producing the ballets for *Armide* the opera-ballet by Lulli and will also present a new version of *Chout* to music by Prokhofiev. This was first done by the Diaghilev Ballet in 1921. Maria d'Alba and Vladimir Skouratoff will have the leading roles in this ballet.

It has been announced that the Marquis de Cuevas' Grand Ballet de Monte Carlo will appear at the Venice International Festival of Music during September.

FERDINAND REYNA.

A letter from Gérard Mulys, now ballet master at the Nice Opera House, tells of his recent productions of *La Fille Mal Gardée* and the *Polovtsian Dances from 'Prince Igor'* which have never been seen in France outside Paris until now. He also writes that for the celebrations in connection with the recent accession of the Prince of Monaco, Massine went to Monte Carlo to arrange a special performance in the Palace of *Capricio Espagnole*. The occasion was also marked by the first performance of *Persephone* by John Taras, with Rosella Hightower and André Eglevsky in the leading roles. This was on April 11th and on April 12th and 15th other special performances were given with creations by Massine and Taras specially arranged for the Coronation.

Of Skibine's début as a choreographer Monsieur Mulys also writes :

"On May 4th, George Skibine's first ballet, *Une Tragédie à Verone* had its première at the Casino de Monte Carlo. This is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful ballets in the repertoire of the Grand Ballet de Monte Carlo. Skibine has proved with this first work that he has undeniable talent as a choreographer, the choreographic plan is well developed and fits perfectly with the Tchaikovsky music. One's only regret is, perhaps, that the deaths of Romeo and Juliet occur rather late so that the sublime end to the tragedy of these celebrated lovers appears a little hurried. The costumes and decor are stylised in perfect taste and add their share to the success of the ballet with the public which filled the Salle Garnier. Fifteen curtain calls greeted the end of the ballet, which is most unusual in this theatre. The interpretation was excellent, Skibine himself, Ethery Pagava and Serge Golovine particularly distinguishing themselves.

"I did not care either for *Jeux* or *Persephone* but in connection with the latter, Andre Eglevsky having sprained his ankle at a picnic the day before, John Gilpin learnt his part in one afternoon and danced it in the evening.

"On May 8th the company were due to dance in Bordeaux for the International Festival of Music and Dance and were then going on to Barcelona and Holland. During August they will be dancing in Deauville and Paris."

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